

WANDERERS IN FAVOUR OF 'OPEN' SOCCER

WYCOMBE Wanderers are fully in favour of going "open" but will have to wait until September to see what changes the move entails, club chairman Mr. Jack Smethurst told over 100 club members at the Annual General Meeting on Thursday evening.

Mr. Smethurst said that the Rothmans Isthmian League had gone ahead with their plans to go open in a bid to stampede the Football Association. But, he added, it seemed they had been left behind and the clubs will not know anything further on the situation until the F.A. meet in September. He felt the club would continue much on the same lines of last season until the end of 1974-75 term. But when changes were made, "we will be going along with them."

Going through the annual report, Mr. Smethurst said the Amateur Cup defeat at Blyth Spartans was a terrible disappointment to the club but the support at that game and at Evenwood Town was really appreciated.

Commenting on Wycombe's decision to withdraw from the Premier. Midweek Floodlight League he revealed that the club had been fined £50 for leaving the league. He added that a letter had been written in protest over the fine.

Turning to the club finances, Mr. Smethurst felt the club had "held their own pretty well" making a surplus over the season of £36 plus a share of Amateur Cup and F.A. Challenge Cup pool, compared with last year's loss of £438.

Donations had been received from the Supporters Club (£800), the Blues Development Fund

(£4,150) and the Blues Social Club (£1,350). Chelsea F.C. had also made a donation of £500 for signing Kenny Swain as had Blackpool F.C. — £100 for Paul Fuschillo.

Club expenditure was up by £4,481 on last year. Wanderers' home and away fixtures amounted to £12,022 compared with £6,915 last year while bank charges had also increased considerably.

The introduction of V.A.T. in April '73 meant Wycombe paid 10 per cent of their earned income to the Inland Revenue which cost the club approximately £1,500.

Explaining the increase in home and away fixtures, Mr. Smethurst said, "Gate money from our F.A. Cup run had to be shared while the expenditure of two Amateur Cup visits to Blyth and Evenwood and Tilbury, Chatham and Worthing in F.A. Cup was considerable. Expenditure is growing every week. Footballs, for instance, now cost £13-£14. That gives you some impression of what it costs to run a club. We need all the help we can get to raise funds."

There was a four-way ballot

for the three vacant positions on the committee. Two of the retiring members, Gerald Cox and Reg Williams, were re-elected while Alf Ward was elected for the first time. While the votes were being counted, manager Brian Lee commented on last season.

Mr. Lee expressed a good deal of concern for the safety of Wycombe supporters on away grounds. "It is almost endangering lives to go to away matches in some cases. This is a great worry to our club." But he added, "We really appreciate the support."

"I would also like to congratulate the players on their achievements last season. I thought we had the poorest team last year since I've been here. It was remarkable we came out on top and we did it through team spirit."

Mr. Lee paid tribute to two players in particular — Tony Horseman and Larry Pritchard. "I congratulate Tony not just on his scoring feats but for his sportsmanship. You rarely see players like him or Larry committing a foul or cheating."

"The league title must be the aim for us again next season. It is a result of 10½ months hard work and for their success last season, I would like to congratulate all the players."

Speaking from the floor, Mr. Ben Newton posed a number of questions to the club officers concerning the future of Wycombe Wanderers. He felt the club had reached its peak in amateur football and should now concentrate on gaining entry into the Football League.

Mr. Smethurst said the committee were constantly looking into the future of the club and added that Wycombe stood a better chance than many others of getting into the Football League, except for their present facilities.

"Negotiations are still going on between the club, hospital and local council about Loakes Park but there are so many problems to be ironed out before we attempt to join the League."

Another question which arose during any other business was Wycombe's failure to get into the London Senior Cup. Mr. Reg Holt asked the club why they were not participating in

this competition next season.

Mr. Smethurst explained that they had tried for the past three years to obtain permission from the Berks and Bucks F.A. but this had been refused.

Brian Lee was asked a number of questions, one of which concerned the Rothmans Championship of Champions competition due to be played in August. Mr. Lee said that this would now be played in mid-season and Wanderers had been drawn away to Whetton Rovers, the Western League champions and at home to the winners of the Spennymoor United v Moreton Town tie in the final.

Commenting on Mr. Newton's questions he said, "It was better to be top of what you are than be bottom of something else. It is a greater challenge to Wycombe Wanderers to remain on top and retain the championship."

Asked about contracting players, he replied, "I have seen a number of players in the close season and a great deal of money is being thrown around. Wycombe don't waste money. You can't buy success. The only advantage of contracting players is that you know what players you have at the present time."

Dr. David Ellis, the club doctor, was made an honorary life member and a moment's silence was observed for Mr. Reg Maskell, a former secretary and treasurer of the club, who died earlier in the year.

The meeting was concluded by a vote of thanks to the chairman by club president Mr. Monty Seymour.

Officers elected: president — M. E. Seymour, chairman — J. Smethurst, secretary — A. J. Crump, treasurer — R. N. Lee.

Committee: J. Goldsworthy, C. Avery, H. Wharton, T. Thomas, G. Roberts, R. Hart, R. Williams, G. Cox, A. Ward.



TONY HORSEMAN
... sportsmanship



BRIAN LEE
... league target